

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTO 03359 192218Z
ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5035
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: ELECTORAL BOARD'S SECOND DAY OF HEARINGS ON ELECTION
CHALLENGES

1. THE CENTRAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION MET THIS MORNING TO RESUME
HEARINGS ON PARTY CHALLENGES TO THE MAY 16 ELECTIONS (SANTO
DOMINGO 3329).

TODAY'S HEARINGS DEALT SPECIFICALLY WITH THE
ELECTION RESULTS IN THE EASTERN CITY OF HIGUEY, WHICH ARE
BEING CHALLENGED BY BOTH REFORMISTAS AND THE PRD. THE ELECTIONS
IN HIGUEY WERE EXTREMELY CLOSE, WITH THE GOVERNMENT WINNING THE
MAYORSHIP OF THE PROVINCE CAPITAL BY 16 VOTES, AND THE PRD THE
PROVINCE FOR NATIONAL OFFICES BY 80 VOTES.

2. THE HEARING TODAY MARKED A RESUMPTION OF THE DEBATES BE-
TWEEN PRD PARTY PRESIDENT SALVADOR JORGE BLANCO AND REFORMISTA
LEGAL EXPERT "VINCHO" CASTILLO. THERE WAS NO CHANGE FROM THE POSI-
TIONS TAKEN BY BOTH PARTIES ON FRIDAY: THE REFORMISTAS ARE STILL
CALLING FOR "COMPLEMENTARY" OR "EXTRAORDINARY" ELECTIONS, WHILE
THE PRD IS CALLING ON THE JCE TO DECLARE IT THE WINNER OF THE
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MAY 16 ELECTIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

3. BOTH LAWYERS DELIVERED ELOQUENT CLOSING ARGUMENTS.
CASTILLO, AN EXTREMELY ABLE JURIST, WAS HECKLED AT ONE POINT
WHEN HE ONCE AGAIN CALLED FOR COMPLEMENTARY ELECTIONS.
CALMLY, HE TURNED TOWARD THE HECKLERS IN THE AUDIENCE AND
STATED THAT "I AM ADDRESSING MYSELF TO THE DISTINGUISHED

MAGISTRATES, NOT TO THE RABBLE." HE WARNED THAT THE LAW MUST BE RESPECTED AT ALL COSTS, EVEN "UNDER THE THREATS OF GENERAL STRIKES, INDUSTRIAL PARALYSIS, INSURRECTIONS OR CIVIL WAR."

4. IT WAS THEN JORGE'S TURN, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HEARINGS, THE PRD TOOK THE OFFENSIVE. HE ACCUSED THE REFORMISTA "GOVERNMENT APPARATUS" OF TRYING TO "UNDERMINE THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE." HE ALSO CRTIZED THE JCE DECISION TO BRING IN CHILEAN TECHNICIANS TO INVESTIGATE COMPUTER IRREGULARITIES DURING THE ELECTIONS, CHARGING THAT THE JCE MAY HAVE EXCEEDED ITS AUTHORITY BY DOING SO. JORGE WARNED THE THREE-MAN BOARD THAT "THE FUTURE OF THE NATION RESTS IN YOUR HANDS," AND ENDED HIS SOLILOQUY WITH A WARNING TO THE THREE JUSTICES THAT SHOULD THEY IGNORE THE RESULTS OF MAY 16, THEY "WILL HAVE TO ANSWER TO THE NATION." THE BOARD ADJOURNED UNTIL NEXT WEDNESDAY, AND POSTPONED ANY ANNOUNCEMENT OF ITS FINDINGS.

5. COMMENT: THE PRD'S TAKING THE OFFENSIVE AT THE JCE TODAY SEEMED TO SHOW THE GROWING FURSTRATION ON THE PART OF PRD LEADERS AS THE ELECTORAL CHALLENGES CONTINUE AND AUGUST 16 CREEPS CLOSER. THE USUALLY CALM JORGE BLANCO DISPLAYED SOME FIREBRAND ORATORY TODAY, AND MORE OF THE SAME SHOULD BE EXPECTED.
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